

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 0434

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, BEXP, DR
SUB: POLITICAL ASPECTS OF PRESIDENT BALAGUER'S TRIP TO
MIAMI TO PARTICIPATE IN 2ND CONFERENCE ON TRADE,
INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

1. PRESIDENT BALAGUER'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 2ND ANNUAL
CONFERENCE ON US-CARIBBEAN TRADE, INVESTMENT AND DEVELOP-
MENT IN MIAMI, JANUARY 18-20 , WHILE FOCUSING ON CARIBBEAN
SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES, WAS EXPLOITED FULLY BY THE PRESIDENT
AND HIS SUPPORTERS TO PROMOTE BALAGUER'S POLITICAL/ELECTROAL
POSITION IN FUNCTION OF HIS NEARLY DECLARED CANDIDACY FOR
YET ANOTHER TERM IN OFFICE.

2. THE PRINCIPAL SPEAKER AND WARMLY HONORED GUEST IN A
MAJOR CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE STATE OF FLORIDA AND THE
STATE DEPARTMENT, BALAGUER SUCCEEDED IN BEING PORTRAYED AS
A FRIEND OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION-A VALUABLE POLITICAL
COMMODITY HERE. HIS JANUARY 19 SPEECH FURTHER SOLIDIFIED
THE IMAGE OF A NATIONAL LEADER VERY MUCH IN TUNE WITH
CURRENT US POLICIES AND INTERESTS.THE SPEECH ITSELF BROUGHT
RAVE REVIEWS FROM SANTO DOMINGO'S ESTABLISHMENT PRESS, WHICH
LAUDED ITS INTELLECTUAL BRILLIANCE, LITERARY QUALITY
AND FORCEFUL DELIVERY. IT SHOWED BALAGUER AT HIS BEST
AND SERVED TO BELIE LINGERING DOUBTS THAT THE PRESIDENT
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IS FUNCTIONALLY INCAPACITATED BY EYESIGHT OR OTHER
HEALTH PROBLEMS.

3. THE SPEECH WAS COVERED LIVE HERE VIA SATELLITE AND
SHOWN ON TV BY "REFORMISMO EN ACCION", THE FORMIST
PARTY TELEVISION ORGAN. THE PARTY TOOK OUT FULL-PAGE
NEWSPAPER ADS WHICH PRAISED THE PRESIDENT. A "DAY OF

NATIONAL REJOICING" WAS ALSO DECLARED BY ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT GOICO MORALES FOR BALAGUER'S RETURN ON SATURDAY AND REFORMISTA CROWDS WERE MUSTERED TO WELCOME THE PRESIDENT HOME.

4. BALAGUER ALSO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE MIAMI TRIP TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH WERE TAKEN HERE TO BE AN IMPLICIT DECLARATION OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. LOCAL PAPERS ON JANUARY 20 RANT WHAT WAS SAID TO BE THE TEXT OF A BALAGUER INTERVIEW WITH TIME MAGAZINE, IN WHICH IN TYPICALLY EQUIVOCAL LANGUAGE, BALAGUER SAID HE WOULD BOTH LIKE AND NOT LIKE TO RUN AGAIN; YES BECAUSE HE WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE THE WORK OF HIS GOVERNMENT; NO BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN "A SACRIFICE FOR MY PERSONAL HEALTH". HOWEVER, HE CONCLUDED BY ANSWERING A QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE WOULD ACCEPT HIS PARTY'S NOMINATION IF OFFERED BY SAYING, "THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE PARTY DOESN'T HAVE ANOTHER CANDIDATE TO CONFRONT THE OPPOSITION IF IT PRESENTS ITSELF UNITED".

5. OPPOSITION LEADERS WERE CRITICAL OF THE MIAMI TRIP. SHARPEST OF ALL WAS DOMINICAN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRD) SECRETARY GENERAL JOSE FRANCISCO PENA GOMEZ WHO ACCUSED THE USG OF FAVORING THE BALAGUER REGIME AND SAID THE MIAMI CONFERENCE WAS ORGANIZED TO PROMOTE BALAGUER'S REELECTION. PENA WAS CRITICAL OF REMARKS OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN IN MIAMI QUOTED HERE, WHICH HE CALLED "EXCESSIVE PRAISE".
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HE WAS REFERRING TO AN INTERVIEW OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY WITH PEDRO CABA IN LA NOTICIA OF JANUARY 19, IN WHICH TODMAN IS QUOTED AS CALLING BALAGUER "ONE OF THE GREAT LEADERS NOT ONLY OF THE CARIBBEAN BUT ALSO OF THE HEMISPHERE". PENA REFERRED TO LAST YEAR'S FRASER-BRZEZINSKI EXCHANGE OF LETTERS AND SAID THAT CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AS WELL AS OTHER SECTORS OF AMERICAN OPINION ARE "GREATLY WORRIED BY THE TURN WHICH HAS BEEN TAKEN IN THE POLICY OF THE WHITE HOUSE AND SECTORS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN FAVOR OF PRESIDENT BALAGUER".

6. COMMENT: BALAGUER'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MIAMI CONFERENCE, CONTRIBUTING RICHLY TO ITS SUCCESS, HAS ALSO BEEN GOOD FOR HIS OWN POLITICAL STATURE AT HOME. QUITE UNDERSTANDABLY HE AND HIS SUPPORTERS ARE GETTING AS MUCH ELECTORAL MILEAGE OUT OF THE TRIP AS POSSIBLE. IT COMES AT A TIME HOWEVER WHEN THE OPPOSITION IS SUFFERING FROM A CERTAIN MALAISE AND INACTION. THE CRITICAL REACTION OF PENA GOMEZ AND OTHERS TO BALAGUER'S MIAMI SUCCESS REFLECTS THE DISPOSITION OF OPPOSITION LEADERS TO USE ALL OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCUSE THE U.S. OF PARTIALITY.
HURWITCH

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